Concluding Remarks

Peter Case, Joe Raelin, Martyna Śliwa

The authors of the exchange now reunite to offer some concluding remarks. Our comments arise from a few issues that in the words of one of us "have been left hanging" and thus call out for some expatiation as a way to conclude our story of ethics in the new field of leadership-as-practice. We're responding in the first-person plural but where we have divergence, we will refer to one another using our first names. We hope that our approach, veering as it does from the point-counterpoint convention, is consistent with our espousal of collaborative and, where supporting conditions permit, emancipatory practice.

Although there are many facets of ethical theory and practice that emanate from our commentaries, clearly a principal contribution is how a Western-originated concept, namely leadership-as-practice, plays out or can play out in a non-Western world, or indeed, in Western study settings that do not necessarily conform in all instances to the democratic ideals, if not practices, of inclusion and equality. This leads ultimately to questions of ethnocentricity and whether criticism can or should be transmitted cross-culturally, with the notion of culture understood and applied at a range of levels.

In linking any emerging theory such as leadership-as-practice with emancipatory possibilities and processes, including praxis and critical dialogue, the work of Paolo Freire comes to mind in his education of the oppressed using "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1970, p. 36). Yet, we acknowledge that any moral *a priori* criticism of the social world, such as Freire's, is likely based on loose representational foundations, which suffer from an un-acknowledgement of the contingency of social knowledge (Glass, 2001). Accordingly, are there any formal ethical grounds for signifying the value of freedom and self-determination?

Joe's response pointed to a need for procedural justice based on a free and open humanizing dialogue producing a contestation of views regarding the condition of the self, the other, and the world. The minimal test would be a collective reflection on our social histories sufficient to determine the source and current

state of one's freedom to choose. According to existentialist Sartre (1960), only when people become aware of their histories and cultural contingencies can they make informed decisions about their futures. A practice perspective of leadership, then, relying on a process ontology, constitutes an ever-changing dynamic of our spatio-temporal existence which might be contributory to intercultural sensitivity. Indeed, existential and intercultural sensitivities are matters that Martyna and Peter explored through a co-constructed auto-ethnography focusing on the phenomenon of a cross-cultural encounter in a post-colonial context.

Without drawing any epistemic conclusions regarding the original nature of humans, can there be a frame from which to offer criticism of another culture, be it national, sectoral or organizational? Judith Butler (2005) goes as far as to suggest that our sociality – our ontology as beings who live in an interdependent world – precedes our knowing and that our epistemic limits may actually allow for our humanization. What is primordial is not our self-care as it is the relationality of our existence requiring a care of the other (Levinas, 1969; Hadot, 1995). To Levinas (1969), it is the one who is there, not known to me but who exists as an undeniable reality that I cannot reduce to images or ideas in my head.

Accordingly, L-A-P in its ethical reflexivity endorses entwinements that in their moment-by-moment actions portray what the world will be. Although reflexivity can refer to a critical appraisal of the self, it also can refer to a critical understanding of others including a joint appraisal of power distributions among involved stakeholders. We submit that, wherever practical and political circumstances permit, this appraisal be dialogical within a spirit of transparency recognizing power as a performance in relation to others. Actors would recognize that their assumptions, intentions, and actions would be subject to denaturalization (Bevir, 2010). Consequently, as a form of genealogical inquiry, emerging traditions would be subject to contestability to ensure their current emancipatory relevance. Bringing in the ideas of Freire, Sartre, Butler, Levinas and Hadot has helped us move beyond our initial disagreements and establish a common ground and clarity in our understanding of L-A-P. It has also allowed us to reflect on the fact that none of these ideas would have been part of the intellectual socialization and leadership development of those with whom Peter engaged in leadership during his time in Laos.

Finally, there is a question whether leadership can or should point to any preconceived purpose or outcomes when examined as a practice. Although it is certainly fair to examine the effects of leadership practices, Joe would argue that it may be premature to associate leadership with these effects, even those laden with moral values. Researchers might be better positioned to inquire about the processes, including the nature of the interactions among the actors and, in particular, whether they have been open to the inquiry of one another. It is not so much a truth that we are searching for but the nature of our search. Peter and Martyna certainly agree with Joe that attention to process is of paramount importance. All three of us also concur that, particularly in the development and global health contexts in which Peter works, ethical purpose on the part of self and the collectivity is ineluctably integral to *process* and that, consequently, it can be valuable to explore the relationship between leadership process and socially appreciative and sustainable outcomes. There is also, at the same time, unqualified agreement among us about the need for more process research of leadership, in particular, studies like Peter and Martyna's, examining the dynamics of leadership "from within" rather than from outside in order to tap the material-discursive processes that help us truly see into the lived reality of people as they engage in their leadership activity.

References

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